

The World Still Needs God: An Understanding of the Biblical
God as Love from the Perspective of Process Thought and Its
Application to Ministry in Sermons

A Professional Project
presented to
the Faculty of the
Claremont School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

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May 2004

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This professional project, completed by
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has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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Abstract

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This project attempts to explain God as represented in the Bible to modern people in tune with modern mentality. To accomplish this, the project needs to satisfy three requirements from the perspective of process thought. These are logical consistency, empirical applicability and adequateness, and relatedness with Christian identity.

The methodology and the theoretical basis for this project are based on the analysis of human experience, the evolution of human consciousness, and the authenticity of intuitions contained in the Bible. The basic idea for this project is the contrast between the past and the present consciousness of human beings from an evolutionary perspective. The differences between the past and the present involve both the immediacy of experience and their descriptive forms. The experiences of the past are more immediate but their descriptive forms are more ambiguous because these descriptive forms were at that time less developed. The experiences of the present, by contrast, are less immediate but their expressions are clearer due to highly

developed linguistic forms. Therefore, the present can analyze the past by using its sophisticated forms and, thereby, discover the true intuitions in the immediate experiences of the past. In the center of the religious experiences expressed in the Bible, there is God.

To consistently understand God in the Bible, the Natures of God are introduced as forms suggested by process metaphysics: the Primordial, the Consequent.

The biblical intuitions have implied that the ultimate ground of all-living things and the value and meaning of the world are based solely upon God. In the historical process, God's actions have been understood more and more clearly as caused by love and, at last, God himself, or herself, comes to be definitely identified with love itself in the New Testament; "God is love." In the Bible, God's love causes God to create, sustain, and redeem the world. Therefore, the existence of human beings and the world is necessarily based on God's love.

Two sermons are prepared as examples to apply this understanding of process theology to God in the Bible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is dedicated to Dr. David Ray Griffin, my mentor.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Problem Addressed by the Project

The problem addressed by this project is that today's world, which is dominated by materialistic, mechanistic, and rationalistic modernism, needs God.

Importance of the Problem

In general, we live within a world tamed by a scientific dogmatism that is materialistic-mechanistic, evolutionary, and rationalistic. As a result, many modern people will not recognize or accept anything except what is proved by scientific methods. In other words, people will accept only things experienced or understood in the same way by all people as the same thing. Based on this modern mindset, the *supernatural* things, such as religion, theology, religious experience, divinity itself, and faith itself, have been rejected as unscientific or unreasonable. Often in the eyes of modern scientists, Christianity may seem to be superstitious. This phenomenon is more and more true for lay people as well as pastors educated in the scientific method.

A pastor has to preach or to explain the Bible wherever he, or she, goes. Preaching is one of the biggest responsibilities of a pastor. This is a burden not because of the numbers of sermons. The true reason for the affliction is the discord between what a pastor has learned from seminary, and what a pastor as a Christian has long believed about God and the conflict between the religious needs of the people (including the pastor's needs), and the intellectual honesty of the pastor.

It is certain that a dilemma of Christianity is that it has its origin in ancient events, and it has only slowly absorbed or, in some points, even continuously rejected the challenges of new philosophical and scientific changes. Apart from these questions, the true problem pastors and theologians in fact have had, is that we fail to find appropriate ways to satisfy at the same time the demands of what we believe and what we know and experience. When we fail to satisfy the needs of a congregation, then the members of the church will leave and Christianity will go downhill. Furthermore, if we fail to harmonize what we preach with what we know, then we become schizophrenic.

Given the above context, Christianity should be reinterpreted in tune with today's mind. Of course, the religious vitality that Christianity has kept should still

be kept. Nevertheless, this validity will be modified and magnified by taking into account the new knowledge and experiences of the modern world.

If Process Thought is willing to contribute to such theological reinterpretation, then it must satisfy the following three premises.¹ If such a theological work will truly be Christian for today, it must be coherent and logically consistent, viewed from the rational side; applicable and adequately consistent viewed from the empirical side,² and appropriate for Christianity.³ The reason for the first criterion is obvious. But, the second criterion is equally important. If a metaphysical system or theology cannot be applied to our experience, and hence, it cannot contribute to our understanding or reforming our

¹ Process Thought is initially based on the ideas of Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) and it has been developed by contemporary process philosophers, most importantly Charles Hartshorne, who especially addresses theological and philosophical issues. Process Theology is based both on Whitehead and Hartshorne and it has been developed by many theologians such as Norman Pittenger, Bernard Meland, Daniel Day Williams, Bernard Loomer, John B. Cobb, Jr., Schubert Ogden, David Ray Griffin, Marjorie Suchocki, Bernard Lee, and many others.

² Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1929; Corrected ed., New York: Free Press, 1978), 3-4.

³ Schubert M. Ogden, The Point of Christology (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1982), 4.

actuality, then it will be merely an intellectual game. The third criterion is essential for Christian identity. If a theology or an interpretation intends to be a truly Christian theology, then it should be related to Christianity. In addition, this means it must be adequate to the Bible, apostolic norms, and Christian tradition; for they all have been based upon religious experience and have formed the identity of Christianity.

Thesis

My thesis is that God as love is the indispensable ingredient in creating, sustaining, and redeeming the world and all living things, from the both perspective of the Bible and process theology.

Work Previously Done in the Field

The Bible is the primary source of Christian faith and hence, our faith should be based on the Bible. In the Old Testament, God was first introduced as the creator of the world. God was initially in a covenantal contract with Israel as the chosen people of God. However, in the stream of time, God's relationship to the people came to be understood as a love relationship, such as a husband and a wife, or a bridegroom and a bride, rather than a covenant

relationship. In the New Testament, Jesus proclaims God as a father with an endlessly forgiving love, basing initially upon the Old Testament, but from a different point of view, and his new understanding of God. This understanding of God is further developed by the apostle Paul and his followers from the perspective of Greek philosophy. In addition, the apostle John more deeply developed the idea of the love of God so that he came to the conclusion that God is identified with love. As a result, God is defined as love itself; therefore, "God is love" (1 John 4:8).⁴

Nevertheless, the Bible mainly concentrates on the salvation of human beings, so that God's love is focused on salvation: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16).

At the outset, Whitehead originally understood God as a metaphysical function in order to form the world, so that God was required just as "a principle of limitation," "the ultimate limitation," or "a principle of determination."⁵ Later, Whitehead finally culminated in asserting God as the

⁴ All scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

⁵ Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (New York: Macmillan Company, 1925; reprint, New York: Free Press, 1967), 178.

creator, sustainer, and redeemer: the Primordial Nature of God and the Superjective of God. Finally, Whitehead himself sees God as "the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands."⁶ Furthermore, he suggests that God, according to "the Galilean origin of Christianity," is to be understood by dwelling "upon the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love."⁷

Nevertheless, there is not clearly a logical connection between the former, the metaphysical paradigm, and the latter, love as an attribute of God. Also, love as an attribute of God is not inevitably required as an attribute of God's creating, sustaining, and saving the world.

Scope and Limitation of the Project

The faithful life of a congregation depends mainly upon the pastor's sermons, teaching, and faith, which should basically depend on the Bible. If pastors do not clearly understand what they teach and preach about the Bible, the congregation cannot understand it. If pastors are not confident about what they preach, the congregation

⁶ Whitehead, Process and Reality, 351.

⁷ Ibid., 343.

cannot grow in faith. Accordingly, pastors first of all must logically understand and be confident about what they themselves will address to the congregation. "One blind man cannot lead another one; if he does, both will fall into a ditch" (Matt. 15:14).

The scope of this project is limited to the understanding of God in a Christian Church context. I will try to reinterpret the role and importance of the Bible and the biblical God from the perspective of process thought and the immediate human experiences of God contained in the Bible. The reason for this is that the Bible has been at the core in forming Christianity, and process thought was born of a synthesis of modern physics and human experience on the basis of western philosophy. Bringing process thought, the Bible, and human experience together will provide a realistic theology for preaching and ministry to modern people.

Procedure for Integration

I will first examine the role of metaphysics and try to find the authentic value of the Bible based on the immediate experiences of human beings as a methodology for this project. Second, I will define the natures of God in the context of process philosophy. Third, this

understanding will be applied to explain the Bible's idea of God as love. Fourth, I will examine the idea of God as an inevitable structural element of the world and all-living things from the perspective of process thought, and will put it together with an understanding of God as love from the perspective of the Bible. Last, I will provide two sermons as examples of the application of this synthesis to practical ministry.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1, "Introduction," will set the stage for this paper by explaining the mindset and needs of modern people and the predicament of pastors, and it will lay down the criteria for solving the dilemma.

Chapter 2, "Metaphysics and the Bible," is my methodology and grounds for this project. I define the role and possible rationale of metaphysics as a tool to understand and explain coherently our experiences. I will try to find the true value of the Bible in the fact that it records authentic immediate experiences of God, which have become nearly impossible for modern people to have. The Bible, I suggest, conveys true religious experiences that can enlighten the spirituality of modern people.

Chapter 3, "God in Process Metaphysics," briefly explains process philosophy's view of the basic characteristics of God and the basic structure of the relation of God and the world. As a basis for understanding the biblical God, God's roles or aspects are divided into two: the primordial and the consequent natures of God.

Chapter 4, "God as Love for the World," correlates God and the world. Viewed from process metaphysics, God and the world are necessarily related. The world is dependent on God for its existence, creative transformation, and meaning and value of the process. At the same time, God is dependent on the world for God's concrete realization, the enlargement of God's self, and satisfaction or enjoyment.

The New Testament defines God as the *source of life* and as *love itself*.⁸ In the New Testament, the various shapes of God which appeared in the Old Testament are integrated and developed into "love," so that God finally comes to be identified with *love itself*. Therefore, God is known only by this love: "Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8).

Given this definition, then it is certain that all God's actions, which are creating, sustaining, and

⁸ "He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him" (John 1:10).

redeeming the world and human beings, are caused by God's love. God as love can be understood as a kind of root power relating everything to one another from the perspective of ontology.⁹

Process philosophy asserts the metaphysical inevitability of the relation of God and the world, and the Bible proclaims the relation of God and the world as the inevitable relation of love.

Chapter 5, "The Application for a Practical Ministry: Two Sermons on Love," provides examples of sermons to apply the understanding of process theology about God to the God as love in the Bible.

⁹ The reason for this is because love is a relational concept and can be known or experienced only in relationships.

Chapter 2

Metaphysics and the Bible

A Metaphysics

The peculiar character of human beings consists in their capability for reflective thinking.¹ Through the process of reflection, human beings have tried more clearly to understand, express, judge, or improve what is happening in their surroundings and what they are experiencing. In this sense, it is certain that almost all of what human beings have achieved is dependent on their reflective ability. Nevertheless, the human mind must be spurred initially by some kind of immediate experience in order to start the process of reflection. Therefore, reflection is the activity of the human mind responding initially to surrounding stimuli as experienced.

Throughout time, human beings have pursued a clearer understanding and expression of the consciousness of their experiences. This need to give understanding and expression to experiences requires metaphysical paradigms. Metaphysics

¹ John B. Cobb, Jr., The Structure of Christian Existence (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967; reprint, Lanham, md.: University Press of America, 1990), 41.

means some kind of principles by which human reason tries clearly to understand what is beyond immediate human experience. Thus, the purpose of metaphysics is to explicate the relations and connections of scattered, varied, immediate experiences, and therefore, finally to generalize them according to some paradigm.

The formation of metaphysical principles basically depends upon the analysis of immediate human experiences in history and events in nature. Through regular periods of natural phenomena and the repeated experiences with such phenomena, human reason reflects on this regularity, and comes to find some patterns and to presume principles that govern our experiences hidden in such phenomena. Nevertheless, the principles presumed by such phenomenological and experiential principles do not directly form metaphysics until they are repeatedly proven by experiences, and until reflective reason arranges various phenomena and experiences into a coherent system, because we obviously know that "[t]he things directly observed are, almost always, only samples."²

Simultaneously, any metaphysics or philosophy in itself cannot be a final system because it may never come

² Whitehead, Process and Reality, 35.

to be the exact same thing as mathematical principles having a perfect generalization or abstraction. The reason for this is that our experiences change in relation to scientific discoveries, so that any metaphysics or philosophy changes under the influences of our experiential changes. Given this fact then, it should aim at understanding our contemporary experiences. In this sense, it cannot but be more than a working hypothesis or a means of explaining our experiences or phenomena. A better metaphysical paradigm is always required.

For example, Whitehead coined the term *actual occasions* to designate the entities that are fully actual. However, he sometimes uses *occasions of experiences* to emphasize the fact that every actual entity, or actual occasion, has experience. Even though both terms have almost the same meaning, in that they are presupposed to explain reality, he selects one term or the other in a particular passage. Nevertheless, he generally uses *actual entities* or *actual occasions* to indicate the ultimate things composing nature. To emphasize characteristics of the ultimate as experiencing events, he uses the term *occasions of experience*. Griffin also coined *panexperientialism* to help modern people gain a more easy understanding of actual entities. Accordingly, the

obligation of metaphysics is to seek after a more elaborate understanding that fits our immediate experience and logical reason. Therefore, any system of metaphysics should open a better understanding and explanation of human experiences because the possibility of new discoveries and new experiences is still open before us. At the same time, any metaphysics should be corrected by our experiences. Accordingly, our immediate experiences, Whitehead says, must be the final judge as to the genuineness or falsity of all metaphysical explanations.³

A Metaphysical Paradigm:

The Evolution of Human Consciousness

From the atomic to the animal level, everything is composed of experiencing actual occasions. Experience is a basic component of every fully actual entity. However, not everything is conscious of its own experience. To be conscious of such experiences, a highly developed psyche (or mind) integrating such experiences into one unified experience is required. In other words, even though

³ Whitehead says, "[t]he elucidation of immediate experience is the sole justification for any thought; and the starting-point for thought is the analytic observation of components of this experience." Whitehead, Process and Reality, 4.

everything in the world has experience, consciousness of such experiences as an integrated experience is possible only for very high-level beings.

On the assumption that the human has been developed out of the subhuman and the subhuman has been developed out of nature, all finite beings, including the human and the subhuman, are products of nature and still parts of nature. In the same dimension, every element constituting the human and any organism in nature is composed of the same elements and follows the same general principles as the rest of nature; it is presupposed that, although there is divine influence in the world, this divine influence does not involve supernatural interventions. The principles governing the evolution of human beings are also the same principles forming and governing nature. Given this assumption then, we come to the conclusion that the logical structure of consciousness, and experience itself must be in accord with the structure of the world because human experience and consciousness are a part of the world and result from and within the world. Our descriptions of our religious experiences must be in accord with our more general description of reality. On the contrary, individuals in different religious-cultural traditions have quite different experiences and ideas. If these are true,

then from where do the discordance of experiences, the consciousness of the experiences, and the ambiguity of the consciousness of the experience originate?

The cause can be traced to the evolution of human beings. Consciousness of human beings is also a product of the world. Nevertheless, nature in its basic elements has no consciousness. Viewed from the perspective of evolution, it is certain that the appearance of the human consciousness is the result of a long evolution as well as the outcome of a gradual differentiation from nature in the process of biological and then cultural evolution to form a distinctively human identity. This is because human consciousness as a unified experience is possible only on the premise of being limited and differentiated from the others: the formation of identity. The thinking faculty of human beings, in particular, presupposes being differentiated from nature, so that the structure of human thinking differs from the structure of nature and has its own particular form. In a sense, these characteristics may be unique to human beings. Accordingly, from these presuppositions, we can deduce that human consciousness has grown in proportion to experiences being integrated into a coherent experience by a higher society of actual occasions, or a psyche, and in proportion to that an

observing/experiencing subject, a human consciousness, and an observed/experienced object, nature, are separated into two.

At the same time, the human experiences of nature in themselves have also receded from the immediacy of experience in experiencing nature, in proportion to how consciousness objectifies nature and differentiates consciousness itself from nature. This is because consciousness of experience as such originally results from the immediacy of experience. Also, human consciousness has come of age, experiencing itself as independent from nature, its mother, and, at last, has come to possess its own particular forms and ability different from nature and the principles of nature, even though the human being is still a part of nature.

On the other hand, the consciousness of human beings has developed in step with a progression of symbolic forms, such as "linguistic forms, artistic images, mythical symbols, or religious rites" by which human beings understand and express their experiences.⁴ All of these result from the human consciousness gradually

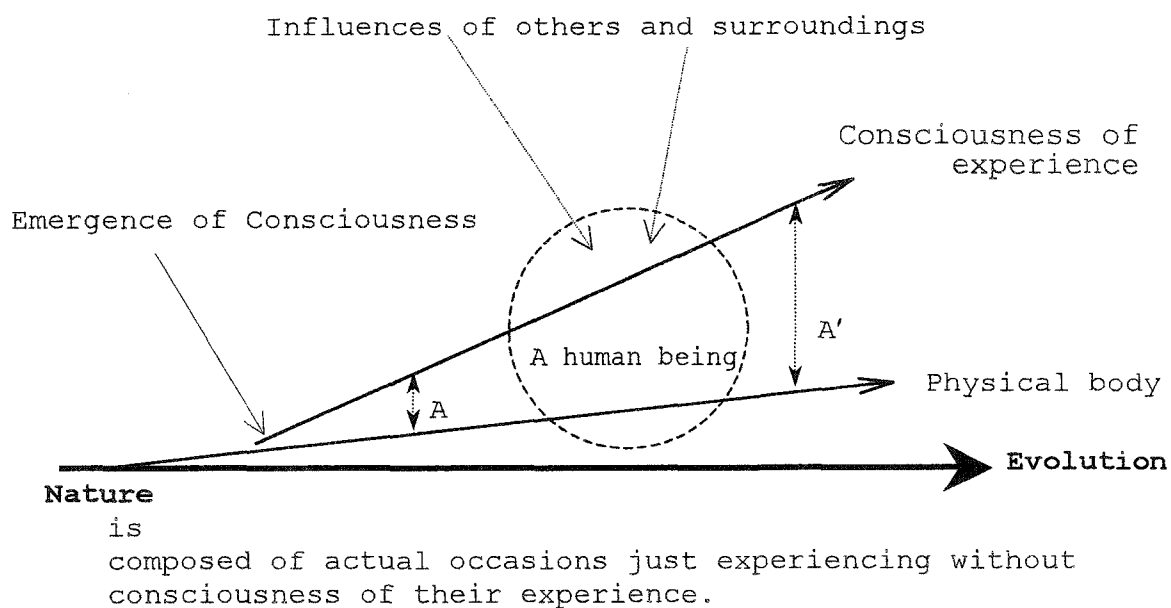
⁴ Ernst Cassirer, An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), 25.

distinguishing itself from nature, while at the same time, objectifying nature. These results are also because symbolic forms function to restrict nature into certain forms, to objectify nature into observable objects, and, as a result, to differentiate the human experiences from nature. It is certain that, only by limiting something into a certain form can everything distinguish and possess its own identity different from others. Consequently, in spite of the fact that human beings are still a part of nature, the conscious experience of human beings can almost no longer be an intimate part of nature. Now, it (the conscious experience of human beings) has come to be a different thing, having its own principles remote from natural principles. In other words, for human beings, the world, or even God, has come to be an object that human beings can experience only through the medium of symbolic forms. According to Ernst Cassirer, therefore,

No longer can man confront reality immediately; he cannot see it, as it were, face to face. Psychical reality [as an object of conscious experiences] seems to recede in proportion as man's symbolic activity advances.⁵

The assumptions mentioned so far can now be illustrated as follows:

⁵ Cassirer, 25.



The difference between **A**, the initial stage of evolution, and **A'**, the advanced stage of evolution, is defined as the difference between the immediacy of experience and its consciousness.

Based on the assumptions of the diagram, the evolution of consciousness is defined as an increase in complexity and refinement and, at the same time, it parallels the accumulation of human knowledge. In other words, when the past is newly integrated with others by new visions or forms, a progress of consciousness emerges into history. For example, great thinkers of the *axial period* emerged in

history by integrating past experiences and wisdom into more sophisticated forms or new visions. Similarly, newly integrating various experiences of God into the Old Testament, Jesus embodied a newer vision of God as love. The apostle Paul and his followers presented a novel vision by further developing Jesus' vision by using their more sophisticated rational forms based on Greek philosophy. Whitehead also integrated modern physics and various past philosophies into his organism philosophy. Whenever the past is integrated by a new vision or a more precise form, novelty emerges into history. This process is the evolution of consciousness and philosophy.

The Authenticity of Experiences of God in the Bible

From the perspective of process thought, everything is composed of experiencing itself. However, there is an exception; for human beings, consciousness of the experience and the experience of nature are not the same. There is a big difference between human beings and other animals, in that human beings have self-consciousness by which they objectify and are conscious of objects. Also, given the evolution of human consciousness, it must, furthermore, be recognized that there must be a big difference between ancient and modern people.

In other words, when past and present experiences are compared from this evolutionary perspective, experiences of reality (whether they be experiences of the finite world, of God, or of God-and-the-world) in the past were more immediate than such experience today. Today, however, we have more precise categories and terms in which to describe our experiences. At the same time, the differences between the past and the present will involve both the immediacy of experience and its descriptive forms. The experiences of the past were more immediate but their descriptive forms were more ambiguous because descriptive forms were at that time less developed. The experiences of the present, by contrast, are less immediate but their expressions are clearer due to highly developed linguistic forms. For example, artistic forms of today such as painting, music, or poetry still express human experiences in more immediate ways. Nevertheless, they are also ambiguous, as ancient forms/myths of expressions were.

Applying the same pattern as above, we could assert that ancient people could more closely feel and experience nature, for they could not sufficiently objectify nature, so that they lived in one united body with nature. As a result, they could more closely and directly feel and experience nature, but their expressive forms were so

undeveloped that their expressions were ambiguous. On the contrary, modern people, having highly developed expressive forms, feel and experience nature less directly; for they have objectified nature and so they no longer remain in nature as an intimate part of it. As a result, they less directly experience nature, but their analytic ability has been so highly developed that it is precise enough to analyze all experiences of human beings.

Given the premises stated above, the closer we go to an ancient age of human experience, the less specialized from nature human experience becomes. Accordingly, ancient people could experience nature more immediately than civilized people can experience in more sophisticated dualistic expressive forms.⁶ Such experiences were expressed in mythical or symbolic forms, which are less specialized forms than immediate experiences of nature.

The Bible is an ancient document, which was written in a less specialized linguistic form, so that the Bible contains more immediate experiences of God in ancient times.

⁶ Frye says, "There [in much of the Bible] is relatively little emphasis on a clear separation of subjective and objective: the emphasis falls rather on the feeling that subject and object are linked by a common power or energy." Ronald L. Farmer, Beyond the Impasse: The Promise of a Process Hermeneutic (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 53, quoting Northrop Frye, The Great Code: The Bible and Literature (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 7.

Accordingly, the Bible is usually ambiguous in its expression, in its content, and in its logical consistency but immediate in the human experiences of God. The reason for this is that the mythical or symbolic languages in the Bible reflect the worldview in which the Bible was formed. Furthermore, its explanations about experiences of God or the world were limited by its ancient worldview and its expressive forms.⁷ By contrast, to modern people, the Bible conveys the more direct experiences of nature as well as of God, even though Rudolf Bultmann insists that "the real point of a myth is not to give an objective world picture; what is expressed in it, rather, is how we human beings understand ourselves in our world."⁸ The myth originally designed to express immediate experiences by the ancient people fundamentally relates to some kinds of immediate experiences with true intuitions of the world and God.

The Bible is one of the oldest documents filled with stories of God, in other words, with more immediate

⁷ Rudolf Bultmann says, "Its [myth's] real intention to talk about a transcendent power to which both we and the world are subject is hampered and obscured by the objectifying character of its assertions." Rudolf Bultmann, The New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings, ed. and trans. Schubert M. Ogden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 10.

⁸ Bultmann, 9.

experiences and true intuitions of God and the world. Accordingly, if the Bible holds somehow true experiences and intuitions of God and the world, then they are experiences and intuitions that modern people find it almost impossible to share. Even though expressions for God in the Bible are ambiguous and various, they are, we can believe, expressions of authentic experiential impressions about God and the world. If the characteristics of the expressions and intuitions for God and the world are precisely analyzed by a coherent metaphysical method, we can get a clearer understanding about God and the world, which the ancients could not be aware of. On this point, Ernst Cassirer says,

Though myth is fictitious, it is an unconscious, not a conscious fiction. The primitive mind was not aware of the meaning of its own creations. But it is for us, it is for our scientific analysis, to reveal this meaning—to detect the true face behind these innumerable masks.⁹

For example, speaking to this point, Cobb also says, Whitehead's notion of God, such as the tender elements in the world, the love for the world, or the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands, "is indebted to his

⁹ Cassirer, 74.

analysis of the life and insights of Jesus."¹⁰

The Bible, containing past intuitions with more immediate experiences, says that there is a God who is the creator, sustainer, ruler, judge, and redeemer of the world, who rules the world by his coercive-but-soothing love. Even though the images of God are various in the Old testament, the image of God as persuasive, luring, forgiving love is expressed more clearly in the New Testament.

¹⁰ John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 95.

Chapter 3

God in Process Metaphysics

The Emergence of Questions about the Existence of God in the Modern Worldview

The mission of Christian theology is consistently to explicate God initially revealed in the Bible, and the relation between God and the world in tune with our reason. This mission has been achieved mainly in relation to philosophy. In this sense, philosophy and theology have each developed in a close relation to each other, in a cooperative or competitive relationship. Even though philosophy and theology have some problems in common, whereas philosophy has more rapidly developed in tune with scientific discoveries, theology might have implicitly but intentionally tended to reject them. The reason for this is that Christian theology is based on the Bible and the Bible has its origin in ancient events, so that theology has intentionally kept the identity of its past, and hence, only slowly absorbed, or in some points, even continuously rejected the challenges of new scientific discoveries. As a result, since especially the late seventeenth century, philosophy has explicitly or implicitly raised questions

about the authenticity of theology, especially of the intuitions and experiences of God in the Bible.

Philosophical, radical questions about God revealed in the Bible have been raised with philosophical assumptions about nature from the perspective of dualism in the late seventeenth century: mind-body or soul-matter. Since then, the mind-body problem has been the central problem for modern philosophy and, at the same time, with this problem have questions to God been raised.¹

The mind-body problem was initiated by Rene Descartes' dualistic assumption about nature and human beings. According to Descartes, nature is composed of matter, and the human being is composed of matter and soul. The attribute of matter is *extension* according to natural laws and the attribute of soul is *thinking* according to its own spontaneity, so that each has its own property having a totally different substance from the other. Viewed from the perspective of dualism, the main problem is, consequently, how mind is connected with matter. In faith, Descartes solved this connection problem by presupposing the supernatural mediation of a god.

¹ David Ray Griffin, Religion and Scientific Naturalism: Overcoming the Conflicts (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 137.

However, this early modern worldview, "which combined *mechanistic* doctrine of nature with a *dualistic* doctrine of the human being and a *supernaturalistic* doctrine of reality as a whole, was replaced by *materialism* and *atheism*" under the influence of Darwin's evolutionary theory and the "mechanical philosophy of nature," in the middle of the nineteenth century.² The mechanistic view of nature, which is based on experiences of automatic machines such as the famous clock at Strasbourg, "meant that all natural causation is *efficient causation*, meaning the causal influence of one thing upon another": a chain of influences.³ As a result, the modern scientific worldview with materialism and atheism has eliminated the necessity for a god. At the same time, in the modern scientific worldview there is no longer room for purpose, freedom, intrinsic values, etc., because all relationships between all things are governed by exact mechanical principles and are only externally related with one another.

² Griffin, Religion and Scientific Naturalism, 22-25.

³ Ibid, 25.

The Basic Structure of the Relation between God
and the World in Process Metaphysics

The basic insight of Whitehead's metaphysics is based on the idea that all actuality is a set of interrelated becomings, or becoming organisms. With this insight, he overcomes all these problems of dualism and mechanistic materialism by defining the category of the ultimate as "creativity," "many," and "one."⁴ These three, all on the same level, share a kind of the basic characteristics of initially making actual entities possible and of intrinsically indwelling in actual entities. Creativity is a kind of root power or attribute making it possible that "[t]he many become one, and are increased by one," and, in such processes, it comes to the basis from which novelty emerges.⁵ In the context of this interrelatedness composed of creativity, many, and one, actual entities finally come into being.

There are actual entities, and in them is creativity that can actualize infinite possibilities, that is, eternal objects. From a logical point of view, a possibility

⁴ Whitehead, Process and Reality, 21.

⁵ Ibid., 21.

precedes its actualization, but they have no intrinsic value apart from their actualizations. Therefore, "actual entities are the final real things of which the world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real."⁶

Actual entities are the final, real things that compose all of the universe that we are experiencing. Many actual entities influence and participate in the becoming of a unified one, then the unified one constitutes one of the many, and through such processes the whole is increased. In other words, actual entities can also be understood as embodying a kind of energy, which is material and mental at the same time, and hence, neither only material nor only mental.⁷ On the same level, Whitehead says, actual entities exist only as momentary "drops of experience"⁸ experiencing their own selves. In this sense, actual entities can be better understood as actual occasions. In interrelatedness, they come to being, grow, mature, and reach *satisfaction*,

⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁷ Dr. Griffin related actual entities to energy as defined by Albert Einstein. He says, "the world is exhaustively composed of things that embody energy: *panenergism*." David R. Griffin, God and Religion in the Postmodern World (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 23.

⁸ Whitehead, Process and Reality, 18.

and then *perish* in the sense that they lose their subjective experiences. All objects we experience with our sense organs are societies of actual entities.

To constitute a unified extensive continuum, actual entitiesprehend others positively or negatively according to their subjective aim, which governs a conceptual feeling of "what the process may achieve together with appetite toward its realization [satisfaction]." ⁹ That actual entities can negativelyprehend others points out the fact that all of the past is not simply repeated. On the contrary, that actual entities can positivelyprehend others, points out the facts that the present is in continuity with the past, and that the past is creatively integrated into the present and, through these processes, the present thereby realizes novelty. As a result, becoming is partly conditioned by its past from which it issues, and is also partly not yet determined and is open for the future. Accordingly, these indicate that new things emerge in history, and creativity in these processes is already premised, and also all these presumptions are proved by our daily experiences. Therefore, all processes of actual entities are defined as creativity indwelling in actual

⁹ Farmer, Beyond the Impasse, 203.

entities to realize intrinsic values.

In the world, there are actual entities and various objects that we are experiencing. Because an actualization presupposes its possibility in a pure state, a certain real thing indicates its certain possibility before its actualization. This can be likened to the relation of a triangle and its sides. We cannot imagine a triangle without three sides. Therefore, both simultaneously coincide and coexist. Just as a triangle cannot be imagined without its sides, our experiences of certain objects presume their possibilities. Hence, pure possibilities—eternal objects—can be disclosed “only in terms of their potentialities for ingression into the becoming of actual entities.”¹⁰

Eternal objects gain their actuality only by being prehended by actual entities. Such processes of concrescence are governed by the subjective aim of actual entities toward their own satisfaction. On this point, we can presume that, if there already are eternal objects, such as colors, scents, or geometrical principles, as universal possibilities to actualize, and also if actual entities have their own power to choose and to decide their

¹⁰ Whitehead, Process and Reality, 23.

becoming in their primary phases because of having creativity, then actual entities might take their subjective aims directly from eternal objects without any mediation. However, this is impossible. If this were possible, then the universe would have been plunged into chaos again and again. The reason for this is that infinite possibilities are just chaos unless they are limited and harmonized into a particular order. That actual entities themselves limit or harmonize eternal objects, and choose or determine their becoming into particular things, is impossible without envisaging the totality of possibilities, because parts can be only arranged in relation with the whole. Given this, actual entities must be conditioned by their immediate past. The immediate past must be also conditioned by their subjective aims. At the same time, the subjective aims must be also conditioned by certain initial aims prior to the subjective aims. In this way, going back to their origins, then initial aims, too, cannot but presuppose something else to envisage the entire realm of possibility and to arrange each possibility; for parts are possible only by premising being limited into certain forms and being harmonized into a particular order in the whole.

Actual entities relate to and are related with each other. Furthermore, even though they relate to the whole,

they cannot envisage or comprehend possibilities or the whole. It is because actual entities are real, and being real means being limited into a certain thing or form, and being in a certain thing or form is very remote from possibilities, so that the limited cannot envisage whole possibilities in a pure state. Consequently, there must be another special actual entity that can envisage and comprehend the whole unto itself; the special actual entity is God as the principle of limitation.¹¹ Based upon these premises, to relate pure possibilities with their real availability and to limit pure possibilities into their real actualizations, God has to be an actual entity in which those possibilities are contained because there is no real thing except for actual entities. Therefore, God is that actual entity who gives actuality to eternal objects by including them within himself, or herself. From this point of view, God is an integral part of the process of all realizations. Due to God, pure possibilities can exist, and can exert causal efficacy on finite actual entities.

¹¹ On this point, Whitehead says, "we require God as the Principle of Concretion." Alfred North Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1933. Reprint, New York: Free Press, 1967), 174. He also says, "Thus as a further element in the metaphysical situation, there is required a principle of limitation.... God is the ultimate limitation..." Whitehead, *Ibid.*, 178.

The Natures of God

Viewing the human experiences of God in history, especially in the Bible, we meet God who sometimes takes part in God's people's life, sometimes totally transcending the human world, and judging all of what is happening in the world. God is very real in the experiences of human beings in the Bible. If God had no relation with human experiences or with the religious needs of people, people would have thrown such a god away before long, like an old shoe.

From the point of view of process thought, the final reality that composes the universe is only actual entities because there is nothing beyond actual entities. Accordingly, God can also be described as, "analogously to a human soul, a serially ordered society of occasions of experience."¹² Therefore, God is also in each moment an

¹² David Ray Griffin, Reenchantment Without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 151. Dr. Griffin *strongly* disputes Whitehead's view regarding God as a single, everlasting actual entity, for this view creates two serious problems caused by equating the divine dipolarity with the dipolarity of a finite actual entity and so violating metaphysical principles: first, the equating of God's primordial nature with eternity and the equating of God's consequent nature with change and, second, the equating of God's primordial nature with God's mental pole

actual entity, and hence God is described in the same terms as every other actual entity. Each divine occasion is dipolar with a mental pole and a physical pole. God prehends others physically and conceptually.¹³ Also, God is prehendend physically and conceptually by others, so that God experiences others and is experienced by others. God also has a subjective aim and seeks after God's satisfaction.

and God's consequent nature with God's physical pole. In the explaining the reason for the first problem, Griffin says the fact that for Whitehead "the primordial nature is not only God as *influencing* the world but also God as *unchanging* lies behind the problem... of how a wholly unchanging aspect of God can by itself supply initial aims that are relevant to the concrete situation of finite actual occasions, thereby accounting for 'particular providence for particular occasions.'" The reason for the second one involves "a reversal of the usual relation between the physical and mental poles of an actual entity.... [T]he equation of God as primordial with God's mental pole implies that God originates from the mental pole. In any case, this reversal of the poles seems to make God an exception to a second metaphysical principle." Ibid., 152-53.

¹³ *Prehenion* is the feeling of the other. "It is the process of transforming transitional creativity into concrescent creativity. What is *there* is felt *here* through prehension." Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, God, Christ, Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1999), 259. "Every prehension consists of three factors: (a) the 'subject' which is prehending, namely, the actual entity.... (b) the 'datum' which is prehended; (c) the 'subjective form' which is *how* that subject prehends that datum." Whitehead, Process and Reality, 23. *Physical* prehension is actual entities prehending other actual entities as data, and *conceptual* prehension is actual entities prehending eternal objects as data.

In spite of this modification of Whitehead's view, God is conceived to be a personally ordered society of divine occasions of experience, rather than a single everlasting actual entity; hence, Whitehead's language of the "primordial" and "consequent" natures of God can still be used, as both Cobb and Griffin have shown.

The Primordial Nature of God

Actualizations are just the particularly restricted forms or instances. Before the actualizations, all possibilities must be first harmonized into a unity in a very pure state, because what is logically impossible is also impossible in actuality, such as the famous example of a round square. In this sense, the primordial nature of God is "an abstraction, 'a mere factor in God, deficient in actuality.'"¹⁴ This can be taken to mean that God's "primordial nature" is an aspect of God that is instantiated in every divine occasion of experience.

The primordial nature of God as an ideally harmonized state of all pure possibilities is "one side of God's nature which is constituted by his conceptual experience."¹⁵

¹⁴ Griffin, Reenchantment Without Supernaturalism, 151.

¹⁵ Whitehead, Process and Reality, 345.

On this point, this side of God is absolutely apart from all physical actuality and so is the absolutely abstract side of God because the real is being restricted.¹⁶ Owing to God's primordial nature, God contains the totality of possibilities through the conceptual envisagement of the entire world of eternal objects. Accordingly, in the primordial nature of God there is not any temporal connotation and not any direction toward individual actualities, so that this nature of God connotes some probability of this world or another. The reason for this is that this is the purely conceptual/abstractive aspect of the divinity and, therefore, God's absolute transcendental aspect. In this primordial nature, God cannot be influenced by any other things.

By the conceptual prehension of God's primordial nature, God conceptually envisages and comprehends the ideal realization of all possibilities.¹⁷ Accordingly, the primordial nature is the basis of actualities and the foundation of the actualization of possibilities, so that this is the structure of possibility and the context in

¹⁶ Hence, "this side of his nature is free, complete, primordial, eternal, actually deficient, and unconscious." Whitehead, Process and Reality, 345.

¹⁷ "The primordial nature of God [is] his complete envisagement of eternal objects." Ibid., 44.

which actualization takes place. On the same presupposition, because God limits pure possibilities and provides initial aims for the actualization of possibilities, God is the basis of actualization. If such abstract realization were impossible in God, then it would be impossible to arrange individuals in the universe harmoniously, because parts can only be arranged in relation to the whole.

However, because the final real things are actual entities and there is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real, even in the primordial nature, God is "not before all creation, but with all creation."¹⁸ Therefore, the primordial nature is simply a way to explain how God is related to the world as the context or structure from which pure possibilities are realized into their actualization.

The Consequent Nature of God

The consequent nature of God is the other aspect of God's nature. This nature is constituted by God's physical prehension and experience of all actual occasions in the

¹⁸ Whitehead, Process and Reality, 343.

world.¹⁹ However, the nature, at the same time, includes God's self-determining synthesis of the physical prehension with the conceptual prehension. In this nature, God takes part in events happening in history and also the world takes part in God's life. In these dynamic relations, by influencing each other, God and the world have been changed by each other and are changing. What we are and how we become, affect what God is and how God is to be. So, the future is ever open, but it is constantly influenced by the present. On God's consequent aspect, Whitehead says, this side of God "is determined, incomplete, consequent, 'everlasting,' fully actual, and conscious."²⁰

God prehends other actual entities in the same way that actual entitiesprehend each other: by physical prehension. God physically prehends what is happening and how individuals are changing in the evolving world. When by physical prehension, various happenings are integrated into one united experience in God, God's conceptual prehensions are included. Because God prehends, at the same time, all

¹⁹ This doctrine is not pantheistic because pantheism equates God with the totality of facts happenings. It is panentheistic in that the unified whole is above the sum of its parts. The unified whole is itself a new reality beyond the parts.

²⁰ Whitehead, Process and Reality, 345.

actual occasions and all possibilities, God envisages both what actual occasions are and what they might have ideally been. These prehensions of God are then "integrated with the primordial vision in such a way that there is no loss or obstruction; the actual occasions are prehended in their totality and preserved everlastingly in God."²¹ All of what is happening in the world is taken into God and adds its reality to the reality of God. Hence, everything happening in the world is not meaningless or a vain effort endlessly going back to nothing, but everything has its intrinsic value or meaning because it is everlastingly preserved in God and is used for a better world. Since God prehends all happenings in the world, God knows more, and therefore God sometimes suffers more. "God is the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands."²²

A Process of the World as the Incarnation of God

Initial aims are possible only in the context that envisages all eternal objects. Since the concrescence of actual entities presupposes the subjective aim as the principle of limitation and as the premise of becoming, the

²¹ Farmer, 218-19.

²² Whitehead, Process and Reality, 351.

subjective aim cannot emerge directly from the subject of the becoming entities themselves. Accordingly, God's primordial nature is the context from which initial aims emerge. When actual entities take the initial aims that God provides, the initial aims become the subjective aims of becoming entities and start to form the identity of the subject in question. Therefore, the initial phase of the becoming of actual entities is "a direct derivate from God's primordial nature."²³

Subjective aims are provided, directed, and harmonized by God himself, or herself, in order to actualize the harmony and balance of the universe. For actual entities to become, they cannot but absolutely depend upon God. This can be understood as an absolute dependence of all creatures upon God from a different standpoint from that of traditional theology. Of course, in the point of view of Whitehead, this does not require God's unilateral creation, because actual entities themselves have their own power inherited in themselves: creativity.²⁴ However, in that only

²³ Whitehead, Process and Reality, 67.

²⁴ In this point, Whitehead says, "God can be termed the creator of each temporal actual entity. But the phrase is apt to be misleading by its suggestion that the ultimate creativity of the universe is ascribed to God's volition." Ibid., 225.

God envisages eternal objects and comprehends all of them into God, actual entities cannot but depend upon God. Nevertheless, God cannot monopolize all power because actual entities have their own power; hence, actual entities, on the one hand, do not totally depend upon God. Nevertheless, God in the envisagement of eternal objects is the home of all possibilities; hence, all creatures, in this sense, are wholly dependent upon God. Nevertheless, God, to be real, is dependent upon actual entities as well.

In the initial phase of concrescence, actual entities derive their initial subjective aims from God, but in their succeeding process, actual entities finally decide their own subjective aim. Since the consequent nature of God is composed of all the actualities of the world, all that is accumulated in God's consequent nature is harmoniously actualized, and all experiences and novelty of all actual entities are everlastingly preserved in God's consequent nature.²⁵ God prehends all of what is happening and all of what God prehends is, reversely, prehended by actual entities. In this way, God is constantly giving himself, or herself, back to the world. Therefore, "each moment becomes what it is because of God's contribution both of an initial

²⁵ Whitehead, Process and Reality, 351.

aim and of himself, or herself, as datum for the emergence of the new occasion."²⁶

We can say that the world came from God in that, in its initial phase of becoming, initial aims emerged from God's primordial nature. Hence, God is incarnated into the world in that the initial aims are realized in the world. In the next phase, however,

God prehends all the actual occasions that have just occurred, then unifies all these prehensions into a divine satisfaction [the consequent nature of God], which includes initial aims for the next moment of the universe. These initial aims are based on God's primordial aims combined with God's *sympathetic knowledge of the present situation*.²⁷

The world is getting fertilized in that God keeps on giving himself, or herself, back to the world, and, in this sense, God is continuously being incarnated in the world. At the same time, the world in the end comes back to God in that all of what is happening in the world is everlastingly preserved in God's consequent nature, so that the value which is produced in the world is resurrected in God.

As well as in the terms of traditional Christianity, these roles of God as stated before, can be understood as caused by God's love and grace; the world was created by

²⁶ Mellert, 62.

²⁷ Griffin, Reenchantment without Supernaturalism, 151.

God's love, is sustained by God's grace, and is resurrected
in God's love.

Chapter 4

God as Love for the World

It is almost certain that religions have begun as intuitions about intrinsic values of the world, and hold that "the values [they hold] are grounded in the inherent structure of reality."¹ On this point, the initial motivation of almost all religions is to find the intrinsic meanings and values of everything alive and the world as a whole, and so their final purposes are thereby to actualize the intrinsic value of the whole universe at the same time.²

The biblical intuitions have said that the ultimate ground of all-living things and the values and meanings of the world are based solely upon God. In the historical process, God's actions have been understood more and more clearly as caused by love, and, at last, God himself, or herself, comes to be definitely identified with love itself in the New Testament: "God is love."³ In the Bible, God's

¹ Griffin, Reenchantment without Supernaturalism, vii and 13.

² We can see this from the fact that almost all ethics of all nations are based initially on religious intuitions.

³ "He who does not love does not know God; for God is love" (1 John 4:8).

love causes God, to create, sustain, and redeem the world. Even though the Bible initially began with intuition about intrinsic values based on God, it has gradually come to understand God as love, and finally has come to identify God with love. From the perspective of Christianity in general and process theology in particular, it will be concluded that God's love is necessary, neither voluntary nor optional in contrast with free will theology, for creating, sustaining, and saving the world in general and human beings in particular. Consequently, everything is possible in love.

In this chapter, first, love and its connotations will be tentatively defined. Second, I will try to trace the historical process of the clarification of love in the Old and New Testaments. Third, from the perspective of process theology, God's love will be understood as the indispensable ingredient in creating, sustaining, and redeeming the world. Fourth, from both the Bible, based on intuition, and process theology, based on radical co-relatedness, love is, accordingly, defined as an ontological ingredient forming everything.

A Definition of Love

What are the linguistic meaning of the word *love* and its connotations? When we speak of *love*, what do we implicitly intend to convey and to express? English has one word for *love*, but Greek has at least four:

epithemia, desire, often with the connotation of impurity or lust; *eros*, which is love of the beautiful, the truth, and the good, the aspiration for fulfillment of the soul's yearning; *philia*, brotherly love, which can mean either the comradely and affectionate love of brother and friends, or the ethical love of neighbour; and *agape*, which in Greek can be used for most of the loves, but in the new Testament is the redeeming love of God shown in his action of forgiveness and redemption in Jesus Christ.⁴

Any kind of love has its objects to love and to be loved. This property of love clearly implies yearning for its objects, so that it tries to combine with its objects. If love is defined as the yearning for others and so as a kind of desire to combine with others, then love implies a kind of a root power to make aimlessly-scattered-and-roaming-things combine and, therefore, to make something possible. However, because everything that is real is either an actual entity or a society embodied in actual entities, love is an attribute of actual entities and love

⁴ Daniel Day Williams, The Spirit and the Forms of Love (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), 2.

is, in this sense, a kind of *impulse* indwelling in actual entities.⁵ From this point of view, love can be defined as the vitality of all things.

In order for this aimless impulse inherent in love to be actualized, however, a kind of metaphysical principle to restrict, to arrange, and to direct this impulse is needed: the principle of limitation.⁶ The reason for this is that the aimless impulse inherent in love is just chaos unless it is limited and harmonized into a particular order. "God is the limitation" on the presupposition that the function of God is to restrict, to arrange, and to harmonize all possibilities. Nevertheless, the principle of limitation is just a *form* to restrict the impulse, but is not the root power to make reality possible.

On the premise as previously mentioned, love can be understood as the underlying vitality for combining things to make everything possible. The biblical intuition proclaims, "God is love." If the intuition is accepted as a true one, then, therefore, God as love is a form of limitation in principle at the same time as the root vitality from the perspective of ontology.

⁵ For example, this impulse could be understood as creativity from the perspective of process philosophy.

⁶ Whitehead, Science and the Modern world, 178.

The Historical Process of the Clarification of God
as Love in the Bible

The intrinsic values of the world were initially grasped by some extraordinary people's intuitions at specific times without any mediation or rational reflection. On the presumption as mentioned in Chapter 3, such intuitions are immediate but generally ambiguous enlightenments, so that when they are clarified through the tools of metaphysics and our reason, the true meanings of the intuitions come to be clear. At the same time, this process takes place in relation to other intuitions. Through such repeated processes of clarification, initial intuitions at last become universal truths; private and personal intuitions become objective and general. Thus, we can say that truths also have their history. From this point of view, our understanding of love in the Bible also has its history; it requires a long historical process of clarification for understanding in tune with our reason. Through the integrative processes and clarification of various intuitions in the Old and the New Testaments, the Bible comes to the conclusion that God is defined as love itself. Therefore, this definition is a refined consummation of initial, crude, and varied intuitions.

If everything is in process toward its maximal actualization, then everything has its history. "If love has a history, then the categories through which one understands the structure of love have their history."⁷ On the same level, our categories of understanding God also have their histories. If love is at the core of human existence creating human history, then God is at the core of human history.

The basic structure of our understanding about objects or even us is initially in accord with the structure of the world. This is because human beings have evolved out of nature and are still part of nature. The structure of the understanding of human beings also is a kind of product of nature. Given this truth, then it is presupposed that although there is divine influence in the world, this divine influence does not deviate from the laws of nature. Therefore, everything constituting the human being is composed of the same kinds of elements, and follows the same general principles as the rest of nature. On this premise, from the evolutionary perspective, the history of human thought is defined as a process of clarifying initial intuitions about the world.

⁷ Williams, 10.

Our structure of the understanding of God as love depends on the same methods through which we experience and understand love. On this point, Williams says, "[one] certainly knows that human loves have a development, and have taken many forms in their self-expression. I propose that this is true of the divine love."⁸ The reason for this is because the categories of our understanding are based on our experiences, so that we cannot experience or even understand something different than we can experience physically or rationally.

God as Love in the Old Testament

In the Bible, God's love is expressed in relation with human existence in concrete circumstances and, therefore, it cannot help being restricted in some specific circumstances and linguistic forms. In the Old Testament, various words for love are used such as

attraction or desire or caring for any object or person, but the central meaning of God's love is Israel's confession that he [God] has chosen to make this one people his own, and this choice is an act of his love.... [For] the Hebrews the love of God is disclosed through his actions. What love does, its concrete mode of expression, is always related to the actual history of God's relationship to men.⁹

⁸ Williams, 18.

This special relationship between God and God's people begins with God's choice and with an exclusive contract with God's chosen people. However, this covenant is conditional and bilateral, so that the continuance of this covenant depends on the performance of each one's duty. Accordingly, even though God initially chose God's people from the motive of love, God loves God's people in a conditional form, so that God's love in the Old Testament is not yet full-fledged.

I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. (Exod. 6:7)

And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people. (Lev. 26:12)

But if you will not obey me, and do not observe all these commandments, if you spurn my statutes, and abhor my ordinances, so that you will not observe all my commandments, and you break my covenant, I in turn will do this to you: I will bring terror on you; consumption and fever that waste the eyes and cause life to pine away. You shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down by your enemies; your foes shall rule over you, and you shall flee though no one pursues you. (Lev. 26:14-17)

In the stream of time, this covenant between God and God's people develops into a more intimate relationship. This relationship comes to be expressed in the language of human love between a father and a son, and between a

⁹ Williams, 19.

husband and a bride. In the relationship, the love between God and God's people is given and taken on both sides.¹⁰ As these categories to express God's love develop, the understanding of God's love develops.

Thus says the LORD:
I remember the devotion of your youth, your love
as a bride, how you followed me in the
wilderness, in a land not sown. (Jer. 2:2)

In these verses, the metaphor of a husband and a bride is used to indicate the love relationship of God and the people. Furthermore, God requires God's people to love their neighbors as themselves in concrete situations. This request of God implicitly alludes to God's love and, at the same time, this love is premised on God himself, or herself, having first loved the people in concrete situations.

The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. (Lev. 19:34)

In the Old Testament, God and God's people were originally in a covenantal relationship as in trade, on condition that both had their own duty to each other. The love for each other is actualized only when the relationship satisfies covenantal conditions. However, this covenantal relationship was initially and unilaterally

¹⁰ Williams, 19-20.

established on God's side presenting the conditions. As a result, in the Old Testament, Israel's obedience to God is repeatedly demanded because God's love to Israel is actualized by Israel's obedience.

So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being. (Deut. 12:12-13)

Furthermore, the Old Testament commands Israel to know what God is and so what God wants for Israel. To love God and always reside in God's love, Israel should know God himself, or herself, and obey God's requests as well. Only through Israel's obedience to God's commandments and decrees can Israel know God, love God, and receive God's love. At the very core of God's making the covenant with Israel, there is God's love and mercy. On the other hand, "His wrath is the reaction of the righteous God to the unfaithfulness of his people."¹¹ Therefore, God himself, or herself, appears as a giver of the commandment, a ruler over the people, and a judge of the people in the Old Testament.

¹¹ Williams, 22.

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and who repays in their own person those who reject him. He does not delay but repays in their own person those who reject him. Therefore, observe diligently the commandment—the statutes, and the ordinances—that I am commanding you today. (Deut. 7:9-11)

By the command of God to Israel in the Old Testament, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5), all commandments finally come to be summarized in the words, "love God." The commandment to love God expresses God's people's loyalty to God and is the prime value to be realized by the people on earth, rather than God's love to the people. Consequently, the commandment to love God is the consummation of all commandments in the Old Testament.

God as Love in the New Testament

Everything is in process toward the future, and so it has its own history and is in continuation with its past. The New Testament is based on intuitions about God and the world presented in the Old Testament and, hence, is an extension of the Old Testament. If we suppose development in our understanding of God in history, then we have to take it for granted that whenever the past is integrated

with a new vision or a more precise form, novelty emerges into history and our understanding of God thereby develops.

The New Testament contains Jesus' clear proclamation of his mission:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:19-20)

However, it is certain that Jesus' mission is based on his new understanding about God and the commandments by integrating various intuitions about God in the Old Testament with his own intuitions.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. (Matt. 5:7)

On the one hand, Jesus upholds the great traditions of the Old Testament. On the other hand, Jesus presents his new vision of God as love from a totally different point of view; Jesus not only presents his newer vision of God's love relationship with God's people rather than covenant relationship, but also deepens our love to our neighbors in more concrete forms.

Jesus' understanding of God as love is well expressed and most deepened in his metaphor about the prodigal son. In this episode, Jesus proclaims God as a father with

endlessly forgiving love, not as a ruler or judge with the strict standard of the commandments.

Also, Jesus' understanding of the commandments to love one's neighbors is well expressed in his parable about the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:36-37)

Furthermore, our love to our neighbors is still more deepened by Jesus' saying: No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends (John 15:13).

From this point of view, Jesus emphasizes, "to love God and your neighbors" as the fulfillment of the whole commandments.

'[To] love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. (Mark 12:33)

The apostle Paul further develops Jesus' vision by his more sophisticated forms based on Greek philosophy and presents an expanded vision of God. From the point of view of ontology and teleology, the apostle Paul and his followers further generalize God as a creator, sustainer, and savior of all.

For from him and through him and to him are all things. (Rom. 11:36)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith. (Rom. 1:16)

One God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. (Eph. 4:6)

He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Col. 1:17)

For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. (Heb. 3:4)

John in the Fourth Gospel introduces himself as a witness of the light.¹²

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. (John 1:6-8)

John begins the Fourth Gospel by introducing the Word (λόγος) of God as the ontological ground of all things before the creation.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. (John 1:1-4)

¹² There are three books of John in the New Testament: Gospel, Letters, and Revelation. We do not exactly know the identity of these authors. "Nevertheless, the Gospel and letters of John are manifestly closer to each other in thought and language.... the Gospel was written first, followed by 1, 2, and 3 John (in that order)." Stephen S. Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, Word Biblical Commentary, v. 51 (Waco: Word Books Publisher, 1984), xxii.

According to George R. Beasley-Murray's commentary on the Fourth Gospel,

The divine nature of the Logos is seen in his activity in creation (1-5), revelation (5, 9-12, 18) and redemption (12-14, 16-17); in all these God expresses himself through the Word.¹³

Based on this assertion, the Logos is not God himself, herself, but "is asserted to be the Mediator... not only in the act of creation, but in its continuance."¹⁴ Therefore, Beasley-Murray concludes as follows:

The life of Jesus, of whom the Gospel will tell, is set in relation to the God of eternity, who is the Lord of the ages, Creator of all, Sustainer of all, and Redeemer of all. He in whom the Word took flesh is presented as the divinely appointed Mediator in all the works of God: he is Mediator of creation and new creation, and in and through both, Mediator of revelation.¹⁵

John in the Gospel proclaims that this Word became a man called Jesus, so that he equates the Word with Jesus.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son [Jesus], full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

Because of his concern for salvation, John's final purpose in the Fourth Gospel is to introduce Jesus as the savior

¹³ George R. Beasley-Murray, John, Word Biblical Commentary, v. 36 (Waco: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 11.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 16.

from God to all people, and so to make them believe in Jesus.

Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me. (John 5:28-30)

Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life. (John 5:24)

The fundamental motive for God sending God's son Jesus is because God loves God's people. Therefore, John sees that God's saving people is initially caused by God's love.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-7)

In addition, John in the Letters clearly confesses that the initiative of love between God and people is in God, so that love is based on God. We love because he [God] *first* loved us (1 John 4:19).

John, who begins with his understanding of God as the ontological ground of the world, finally comes to the conclusion that God is love itself as the ontological ground of all beings and the world. Therefore, God is love.

Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 John 4:8)

It is obvious that the final conclusions of our rational thoughts or immediate experiences or intuitions are based upon our convictions. The reason for this is that ultimate things cannot be directly experienced nor confirmed, so that ultimate things are always expressed by our convictions based upon our intuitions.

The Bible is based on a firm belief that God is love, and the creator, sustainer, redeemer of the world and all beings. If we assume the biblical intuition that God is the ontological ground and the possibilities of the world and beings, then everything is only possible in love. If we also assume the biblical intuition that the past of the world was begun by God, the present is being sustained by God, and the future will be evaluated by God, then even all possibilities are possible in love. To be is possible in love, to know God is possible for us when we are in love, and to be saved is possible for us when we are in love, for God is love.

Love as the Indispensable Ingredient of Making the World

and all Living Things:

Is God's Love Necessary or Optional?

Theology in Progression

Due to our understanding of both biological and cultural evolution, we see that progress is a common feature of the world. We are now perhaps most aware of scientific and technological progress. However, we can also hold that there has been progress in understanding the intuitions about God and the world in the Bible. The history of theology can be defined as progression, as theologians in each time try to reinterpret the biblical intuitions with the help of contemporary scientific and philosophical knowledge, and thereby theology develops.

Christian dogmas have also come into the world as a result of such theological endeavors. Hence, Christian dogmas are the theological reformulation of the biblical intuitions, so that they are in progress. Dr. Griffin, for example, distinguishes the *status* of Christian dogmas into primary, secondary, and tertiary dogmas:

In speaking about... the Christian gospel or good news, it is very important to keep in mind the distinction between *primary* doctrines, which directly express this good news, and *secondary*

doctrines, which have been fashioned in order to support these primary doctrines. There are tertiary doctrines, fashioned to support this or that secondary doctrine.¹⁶

Thus, Dr. Griffin emphasizes that this distinction is "crucial for any attempt to reformulate the Christian good news in the contemporary situation."¹⁷ At the same time, these reformulations already allude to the fact that theologians have pursued the generalizations of the biblical intuitions and the generalizations are still in progress.

The Ontological Inevitability of Love:

A Generalization of Love as the Ground of Beings

I think that any theory should firstly aim to serve its related members, and, secondly, aim to be in harmony with others. The mission of Christian theology should, above all things, aim to serve the churches and their members. Consequently, the demands of Christians seeking a better understanding, or more generalized theologies in

¹⁶ David Ray Griffin, "Process Theology and the Christian Good News: A Response to Classical Free Will Theism," in Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists, ed. John B. Cobb Jr. and Clark H. Pinnock (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 8.

¹⁷ Ibid., 9.

tune with contemporary mind, must be satisfied by Christian theologians, for this is the right of Christians as well as the mission of theologians. Nevertheless, the failure of traditional theologies to satisfy these demands has been extremely exposed by the problem of evil.¹⁸ The problem of evil was initially caused not by biblical intuitions but by the intention of the medieval theological Fathers to protect the perfection of God's goodness and power at the same time, given an understanding of God's *perfection* influenced by Aristotle's philosophical conception of a god. Of course, this dogma was formulated not by biblical intuitions, but by contemporary concerns. Therefore, the dogma is a secondary or tertiary one, which was in response to contemporary concerns, so that it should be revised according to biblical intuitions.¹⁹

The intuition about God in the Bible is, as we have

¹⁸ Dr. Griffin finds the core problem of traditional theologies, including "free will theology" based on "the open view of God," in the problem of evil. "The most obvious is the problem of evil... [it] throws into question the (primary) doctrine of God's perfect goodness and love." Ibid., 15.

¹⁹ Dr. Griffin *strongly* insists on this point: "secondary and tertiary doctrines, no matter how revered they have become through association with a particular interpretation of the good news, are not themselves part of the good news, so that they should be rejected whenever they can be seen to undermine, rather than support, the good news and to be otherwise unwarranted." Ibid., 9.

seen, "God is love." If this intuition is accepted as a true one, based on immediate experiences, then it comes to the conclusion that everything is caused by God's love. If it is acknowledged as a method that we can recognize God's attributes through biblical intuition, then we can question whether the love of God is necessary or optional in creating, sustaining, or saving the world. If the love of God is optional and so intentional, or if "God loves the world only because of a voluntary decision," then we can presume that the existence of the world is contingent or the destiny of the world is not stable, for the world depends on God's variable love.²⁰ Also, if the world is based upon the contingency of God's love, then it is not easy to presume the long, steady history of the universe of several billions years. If God's love is voluntary, then we should choose either "God's love is inherent in the very nature of God" or "God is not love," which means that the world is a by-product of God, rather than God's nature. Dr. Griffin, accordingly, asserts, "[if] divine compassion for creatures is purely voluntary, not inherent in the very nature of who God is, we cannot say that God simply is

²⁰ Ibid., 14.

love."²¹ Given the presupposition that Christian theology should be based upon biblical intuition, then "God is love," so that God's love is the inevitable nature of God.

Conclusion: No God, No World

Religion begins with the intuition that there are intrinsic values and meanings in the world. In the Old and New Testaments, the intuition is that there is a god who created the world and human beings, so that every ordered thing (including the world and human beings) depends absolutely upon God for the source of its orders, which is the ground of being.²²

In the Old Testament, God was understood only in the covenantal relation with his chosen people caused by his love. However, the New Testament finally comes to the conclusion that God is love *itself* as the ontological, sustaining, and salvific ground of the world.

Given this conclusion, then love is the initial motive that makes everything possible. Therefore, if there were no God as love, there would be no creation, no sustenance, and

²¹ Ibid., 17.

²² David Ray Griffin, "Creation out of Nothing, Creation out of Chaos, and the Problem of Evil," in Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy, ed. Stephen T. Davis (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 120-21.

no salvation. From the perspective of both the Bible and process theology, love can be defined as the inevitable, not optional, ingredient for creating, sustaining, and saving the world and human beings. Also, love is proclaimed to be the prime value and meaning to be realized in the world and human relationships.

Chapter 5

The Application for a Practical Ministry:

Two Sermons on Love

"Love Is Like This: Who is God and What Is God's Work?"1 John 4: 7-19

People's thoughts are often changed or largely affected or even determined by meetings with others. There may be various meetings: a meeting with a good or a bad person, a meeting with an exciting or a boring event, a meeting with thoughts or arts, or even a word. Today, I want to introduce a meeting I had with a phrase. As I have studied theology, the most charming phrase I met has been the title of a book, Adventures of Ideas, by a famous process philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead. Whenever I thought of the phrase, I would have a little throb in my heart. Due to "ideal/imaginative adventures" happening in our mind, our life is "creative," every progression is possible, and our life itself becomes thereby abundant more and more and also deeper and deeper. So, I like the phrase very much. Today, I am going to leave with you for a journey into an imaginative/ideal adventure.

According to scientists, a human body is basically made from several chemical elements: oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, sulfur, and many others. You know, they are just chemical elements. Hence a human body can be dissolved into its elements, oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, sulfur, and many others. They are all dead matter. However, living organisms come from them. If this is true, we can presume that the phenomenon of life results from certain combinations of elements. By the elements combining with one another, living organisms have been born and human beings evolved from such primitive living organisms. If this is so, the event of initial creation, in which living organisms were first born, can be understood as resulting from a combination of elements. In other words, creation can be understood as a relational event involving matter.

Genesis 1:2 introduces God's creation like this: before the creation of the world, "the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters." The Bible says that before God created, there was already formless matter or unrelated matter. A wind— the Holy Spirit— from God swept over the matter. If we apply scientific explanation to God's creation, the Holy Spirit let endless formless matter combine, relating one element with another,

and emerge with certain forms. God's act of creation in the Bible was to relate one element to another and to thus create something. If this is so, God is understood as a relating power.

Today's text, verse 8, clearly defines God as "love." Inasmuch as God is love, God's creation is understood as relating one kind of matter to another to create living organisms by God's love. In other words, creation is the phenomena of living organisms formed by love, and hence the essence of living organisms is love and the attribute of love can be understood as a relationship. Let me explain about this by taking an example.

Legend says that the apostle John, the author of today's text, repeatedly preached only one thing, "Love one another." One day, one of his disciples asked his teacher, John, "Why do you only preach, 'love one another'." I want to hear other teachings from you. John answered his disciple, "love one another, only this is sufficient." John says that love is the most important thing in the Christian life, or even in all the time of our life. This is because all creatures, especially, human beings live on love, because we were born in love, because everyone endeavors to love and to be loved more, and because true happiness and value in our life is found only in love. We may be able to

get everything we want, but if there is no love in our life, we feel empty and our life shall come to be in vain, because our life is initially composed of love. Love is all of our lives. So then, what is love?

Have you ever thought of what human beings were made from? What makes a human body and soul, and so makes human beings alive? Do you know what? Have you ever thought about that before?

As I said before, a human body is made from several chemical elements. You know, they are just chemical elements. They are all dead matter. If they are dead, then how do those elements make a human being? How do these make a human being alive? How can the mere combination of matter make a human being able to think and love? What power makes this? The power that combines many chemical elements to form a living person is merely love. The reason for this is "God is love," and love is a relating power because relationship is an attribute of love. However, such an aspect of love, on the other hand, is even sealed in mystery. Hence, it is not easy to explain or to understand love without discussing our real experiences. All relation, even our life in itself, is caused by some kind of love. Our love and longing for something makes us to live and to act. Human beings, especially, live because of love: loving

and being loved. Hence, if there were nobody to love or to receive love from, then a person would slowly die for want of love. We who have nothing to love—neither a person, honor, power, money, or whatever it is—shall be slowly dying. People never live without love. And also whatever is alive lives because of love. It is natural that since a human body is formed by love, if there is no love in it, the human body will turn back to its original chemical elements: oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, sulfur, and many other elements: death. Since the power that originally connected those elements with one another was love, once love is absent, to return to its original state is very natural. Therefore, if there were no love in a living thing at all, then that thing would be just an aggregate of matter. So, love is the power of life in every organism.

What does God's creation of the world mean? The creation indicates an event in which love entered into matter, and therefore an event whereby kinds of matter connected with one another and became a living organism. According to today's text, in I John 4:8, John clearly proclaims, "God is love." Love is the power making every connection possible. Therefore, the creation is an event in which God gave himself, or herself, to matter. The creation is an event in which God as love entered into matter and

connected matter with matter, and thereby made them alive. Why did God create the world? Because God is love, God created the world, human beings, and all other things out of chaos, just matter, by the power of God's love. This is because love can be realized only through the actualization of love: an actualized relation.

What is salvation? Creation and salvation are almost the same words. Hence, they can be explained on the same level, the difference is in time. The creation is an event in which God first entered into matter and saved us from chaos. Salvation is an event in which God himself, or herself, is continuously entering into the world so as to save us, for every thing without love is willing to return to its origin: chaos. In John 15:17, Jesus says, "My Father is still working, and I also am working." "God is still working," is based on the fact that God has continuously worked since the creation of our world. God has been working for our salvation since we were created and Jesus has been also working for our salvation.

Why or how is God still working? For example, we have all experienced love, more or less. I know from my experience that when two people fall in love, even though the two are equally blind with love, they nevertheless do not love with the same intensity of love at the same time.

One loves the other with a slightly more intense love than the other does. Sometimes in their relationship, the intensity of love may change. However, what is important in their love, especially when troubles happen, is that the one who has a more intense love takes initiative to recover their love; the one who has more love first asks for forgiveness from the other, even if he or she has made no mistake at all. The one who has more love comes first to beg peace with the other because the one who has more love feels more pain than the other. And also the one who has more love will love to the last because she or he has more love. This is the essence of love, which is God's nature. Today's text, verse 19, says, "We love because he first loved us." The reason "We do not first love God but God first loved us," is that God loves us more than we love God. Since God loves us more intensely, God suffers more for us and feels more pain than we do. One obvious fact is that the one who has more love first holds out his/her hands to ask for reconciliation with the other, even if he or she has made no mistake at all. Hence, "God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to

be the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10).

Love is like this.

Why did God send God's only Son into the world? Why did God give us His Son, Jesus Christ? The reason for this is that He loves us. Furthermore, He now makes us alive by giving his love, and He will make us live in Heaven forever because he is love. The love is so great that it cannot be hindered or surpassed by anything. Hence, in Romans 8:38-9, the apostle Paul tells us, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." God's love is the greatest one that cannot be surpassed by anything in the world.

Have you ever sincerely loved someone? Have you ever been eager to love someone, to give all you have, even your life, because of love alone? Have you ever tossed and turned sleeplessly in bed because of love? Has your heart ever burned with love? Have you ever longed to express your deep love but failed because no word or action adequately expressed your feeling? If you have never experienced such sincere and ardent love, then, I assure you that you truly cannot understand God, because God is love. If you don't

know love, then it is natural that you don't know God. If you have not experienced such love till now, then hurry up, right now is the time to love! You cannot understand God until you understand the essence of love.

Now, let's think about our love in our present context. We are experiencing the consequences of industrialization. The more industrialized societies become, the more estranged human relationships become; hence, the less and less people love. The more formal and insincere our relationships become, the more our relationships tend to focus on benefits and costs. This is a great sorrow of our times. When we come to select someone to love, we first see the potential partner's condition or abilities, rather than seeing the person as the object of love, someone to whom I can give. In modern times, people often do not love to get a true love. Rather, we seem to love to get something useful for ourselves. Such is not love for my partner, but for my partner's condition or abilities. Of course, such love is love, but the smallest love. Whoever seeks such things will never get true love, or true life. Even though you say, "I love my God," honestly speaking, do you really love God or just what God can do for you? There are some who go to Church to use God to succeed in business. Whoever seeks such things from God will never understand God's love.

If we love someone on the conditions of what the person has or will have, the love is very weak. Love is weak because it is not love for the person, but for the conditions. Hence Jesus said, "Even tax collectors, and also even the pagans do that" (Matt. 5:46-7). Strictly speaking, such love is not love at all. A love that loves only one's own self and only one's own interest is the smallest love. A love has to be above oneself and to go out of oneself toward neighbors, toward a wide world and upward toward Heaven. The more love is above oneself, the bigger it is. Therefore, the biggest love is the love given totally away, to the extent of giving one's life. John's Jesus says, "The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them. And you are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:13). This is just the love of God and Jesus. God gave away all, even his Son. Consequently, God is quite empty. In God, there is nothing more to give away. So God is quite hollow. The Bible in Philipppians 2:7 speaks of this *kenosis* of God—"He emptied himself." Hence God can accept all into himself, or herself. Therefore, God is the greatest lover. And Jesus also gave away all, even his life, for us. Nevertheless, God is full with all.

In spite of our small love, greed, and corruption, God still loves us as he did when He created the world and He first gave us His Son. Just as He gave us life and He gave us His Son, so He will give us a true life, only if we love God and each other. So, today's text, verse 16 says, "So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them."

Once upon a time, when the world was first created, our God had a wonderful dream for us. The dream was a world that was fully filled with His love. The dream was a world in which God's love was fully actualized. The dream of our God will be actualized by God's love for us and our love for God and others.

"A Flower of Love: Resurrection Caused by Love"

1 Corinthians 15: 12-22, 40-44

According to the church calendar, all Christian churches in the world observe today as Easter. Every year, of course, we all have faithfully observed today as Easter. The church has fixed some days for certain important events to be remembered and to be observed, and the church observes them every year. This is because our powers of memory are not so strong and we would sometimes too easily forget very important things if we did not repeat and memorize them. So the church prescribed these events as special days and asks the members to observe them.

Your actions are always attended by your motives or intention. Human beings will not do anything without a motive or concern. You come to church every Sunday. You give your offerings to the church. And also, a pastor asks you continuously to pray and to read the Bible even at your home. You all have spent much time and invested much money for your faith journey. Why have you done this? What is your motive or intention to do these things? If you have done these without any purpose or intention till now, you may have wasted your time and money and so your life itself.

If you have truly done so, then you would better quit attending church programs even right now.

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians was written to deal with problems of Christian life and faith and to encourage them. This letter answers questions about sex and marriage, church order, gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the resurrection. In this letter, Paul confesses his faith to the Corinthians and recommends a proper faithful life to them.

The apostle Paul clearly proclaims to the Corinthians his own reason to believe in God. The reason that he joyfully takes up his cross, he has worked much harder, he has been in prison, he has been whipped much more, and he has been near death more often, is because of his belief in resurrection.

In today's text, I Corinthians, Chapter 15, Paul confesses in verse 17: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins." And in verse 14, "if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain." He firmly declares that if Christ has not been raised, our faith in itself will be in vain. And, in verse 20, "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died." And, therefore, in

the verse 22, he concludes: "as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ." Paul also asks us, "Of what do you believe in God?" Paul believes in God because of the resurrection.

Let me take an example, if someone safely crosses an apparently risky bridge, I also can cross the bridge safely. If someone fixes his house, then I can also do it as he did. If Jesus has been raised from the dead, the way to be resurrected is also open for us. I shall be also raised if I live like Jesus did. Hence, Jesus is "the first fruits," and "as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ." We can get a new life in Jesus Christ.

Just like this, the apostle Paul clearly proclaims, "I believe in God because of the resurrection." Whether we achieve anything is secondary; we first of all have to make our aims clear. Paul throws light on his purpose. What is the purpose of your life of faith? Why do you go to church? I do not think that you walk or drive to church simply out of habit.

The resurrection is an event happening after death. In the Bible, there are many controversies about the resurrection. In fact, today's text is Paul's response to the resurrection controversy. Is there resurrection, or not? If there is resurrection, in what form does

resurrection happen? Are we resurrected as we are now, that is, our physical body? Or, are we resurrected as spirit?

I clearly say, it is not a physical body, nor a spirit, but the third thing totally different from a physical body and a spirit: a spiritual body. We do not know about the spiritual body and we cannot even imagine what the spiritual body is. Today's text, however, in verse 44 clearly proclaims, "It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body." In other words, in verse 42, "So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable." Here is not a profound truth at all: through our bodies that are perishable, if we are dead, we get a forever-imperishable resurrection. We sow our physical bodies and harvest spiritual bodies.

How can we understand this? For example, grapes frequently come on stage in the Bible. So I will take grapes for an illustration. California is very well known for its grapes. There are many world-famous wineries. Their quality of grapes is very fine. However, even the finest grapes will go rotten in a few days if they are left as they are. If they are put in a refrigerator, they will last a few days more. At last, they shall go rotten and

disappear before our eyes. However, how about making the grapes into wine? Once the grapes are changed into wine, it will never go rotten at all, no matter how much time passes by. Rather, the older wine is, the more expensive and precious wine becomes.

Just like this, the perishable grapes become the imperishable wine. It is a kind of the resurrection. Making perishable grapes into forever-imperishable wine is like our life of faith. However, if grapes are merely gathered, they will never become wine automatically. Making grapes into wine is by the function of an enzyme. The enzyme is white powder on the surface of grapes. If we clearly wash grapes and brew wine, they do not become wine but go rotten. That grapes change into wine is just because of the enzyme.

If we really want to change our perishable body into a forever-imperishable spiritual body, then, there must be this enzyme in us, too. If this is true, what is this enzyme? This is love; love is the enzyme to change our physical body into a spiritual body.¹

Let me explain this. When we are going to be resurrected, where are we resurrected? Where is the place?

¹ Jesus also told this parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened" (Matt. 13:33).

Isn't the place in Heaven, in other words, just in God? Isn't the resurrection an event happening in God? The Bible definitely says, "God is love" (1 John 4:7). Therefore, if the resurrection is an event happening in Heaven, that is, in God, the resurrection must be an event happening in love, for God is love. And also we have to be changed into love by love, for love is made only by love. Therefore, since God is love, the resurrection is that our perishable body is changed into love and goes into God. Hence, the Bible says, "We have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them" (1 John 4:16).

And, the text says, "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; indeed, star differs from star in glory." Glory of the sun and moon is different each other and glory between the same stars is also different. Everything is not the same. Even in Heaven, there are grades of glory and differences in degree. Therefore, this text means that just as the older wine becomes, the deeper the perfume and taste of the wine grows, so the more one gives one's love to others, the more glorious shape one has to stand before our Lord. Therefore, everything happening in the world is all

precious and valuable in God, but we have to recognize that there are differences in value and importance.

In our life of faith, there must be faith, hope, and love.² This is because we do not serve others and preach the gospel until we get faith. This is because we are not very pleased in our life of faith until we get hope. However, the most important thing is love. This is because only love can produce the resurrection.

The resurrection is an event happening in love and the love belongs to God because God is love. Love comes from God and love is God's grace toward us. Therefore, God's grace is love opened toward us. To this, John Wesley says, God's grace has been ever opened for all of us. Martin Luther says that this grace is very inexpensive, even free. The resurrection is a gift that God gives to all of us without any cost. However, it is, nevertheless, not easy to get it and also it is not open for everyone. This is because Heaven is not a place we can go to by taking a train or a plane, but because we can go to the Kingdom of God only when we live with love on earth. As you know, to love our enemy is not easy. There must be self-sacrificing and we must overcome ourselves. Even though the Kingdom of

² 1 Cor. 13:13.

God is open for everyone and is free, nevertheless, it is not easy, nor cheap. Bohnhoeffer says, so it is "expensive." Therefore, our lives on earth are very precious, because our lives on earth are time making our resurrection in the Kingdom of God.

Why is this? This is a very natural thing. If people who hate, quarrel, and fight with others on the earth every day are resurrected into Heaven, or God, how is the Kingdom of God going to change? The Kingdom of God is filled with love, so we go to Heaven not by taking a train or a plain but by taking love.

To everyone, there is an obvious truth. It is that people being born must once die. And, time is really fast passing by. For God, time given to people who hate, quarrel, and fight with others on the earth every day will be truly a wasteful one, whereas time given to people who understand, forgive, and love others will be truly a precious one for God, too. This is because the time is the time of people preparing for Heaven, or God.

When I came to Los Angeles from Korea, I was surprised to see almost all trees bloom, and I can see flowers throughout the year. I think this is because sunlight is very abundant. Trees bloom all the year round because of an abundance of sunlight. Likewise, when we live on and in

love, our physical body also comes to bloom and bear fruits. Just this is the resurrection. A life of faith on the earth is not something different from this, nor something profound, which we cannot get or even come up to. That is just to live on and with love. Christians are people living like this. God makes such people to bloom; this is the resurrection. If there is anyone who knows another way to get the resurrection, please, tell me. Then I will give up my faith and follow you.

My beloved all of you! "As for prophecies, they will come to an end. As for tongues, they will cease. As for knowledge, it will come to an end. But, Love will never end" (Cor. 13: 8). Even though everything we do shall be in vain, love will never be in nothing at all and present us an eternal life. Our love on the earth will bloom beautiful flowers in the Kingdom of God.

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